

do what the House wants, it will triple the rates, so we cannot do that. College is already unaffordable for too many young people, and if Congress fails to take action this month, as I have indicated—and I have certainly underlined and underscored the fact—the pricetag will go up significantly for them.

What is suggested by the House and the legislation they passed, it will add about \$6,500 to the average student's loan bill. Their proposal would be worse than doing nothing at all—worse than letting rates double next month.

I hope my Senate Republican colleagues will instead support our efforts to give middle-class families security by freezing interest rates at current levels for 2 years without adding a penny to the deficit. This is exactly the kind of commonsense proposal we need to keep our economy growing, and I will do everything I can to have a vote on the student loan bill this week.

If the Republicans in the Senate want to put forward what they think should be done, I will be happy to have a vote on theirs, and then we will vote on ours.

Even if we have not completed action on the farm bill or student loan proposals, we will bring immigration to the floor next week. The immigration system is broken and it needs to be fixed.

I am grateful Senator McCONNELL said he would not oppose moving to the bill—at least that is the way I read it in the press. He doesn't believe we will need to have cloture on the bill. I hope we do not need to do that, but if we need to do it in order to get on the bill, I will do that.

I know the Republican leader cannot control virtually every Republican, but I hope we can move forward and start the debate on this bill.

IMMIGRATION REFORM

During the recess I had the opportunity to appear at a number of events in Nevada, and the topic at each one of those events was immigration.

I appeared at an event in Las Vegas, where we had between 1,000 and 2,000 people on the street. It was a very moving event. This has always been a personal issue for me. As I have said many times, my father-in-law emigrated from Russia.

I have seen firsthand a huge increase in the number of people coming to Nevada over the last 15 to 20 years. These people have been devastated by our broken immigration system. I have personally devoted more time to immigration reform than any other issue over my career in Congress. Each time I meet with my constituents, they are desperate for commonsense reform. Each time I meet with them, my passion for fixing our broken immigration system is renewed.

This is personal for a lot of reasons. I will always remember when there was a lot of anti-immigration stuff going on in Congress, I went home—to my Washington home—and my wife said: Remember who I am; remember why I am here. My dad came from Russia.

Her words were to that effect. As a result of that brief conversation with Landra, I got the message and I became an advocate for fixing our broken immigration system.

My father-in-law contributed a lot to this country, but the one most important contribution was his only child who is now the mother of my 5 children and the grandmother of 16 grandchildren. So this issue is something that is important to me.

I admire and respect the work of the eight Senators—four Republicans and four Democrats. We need to move forward on this legislation. It is so very important.

I appeared not only at that huge event in Las Vegas, where there were thousands of people, I appeared in a Catholic Church last week in Reno. There were 1,500 people who filled the church and people were standing outside. The 1,500 didn't count toward the people who were outside.

This was organized by faith leaders, not just Catholics. All faiths that believe immigration reform is not a political issue but a moral issue were there. They don't believe it is an economic issue or political issue. I repeat, they believe it is a moral issue, and I agree. A Catholic priest from Carson City shared the story of his grandparents who emigrated from Italy.

As I have already indicated, my wife's parents emigrated from Russia—my father-in-law at least. My mother-in-law barely made it here; she almost was an immigrant, but she was a little baby born someplace in Canada.

Families who come here from other countries need to understand what the law is, and we are trying to determine that as that is our job. Today immigrant families come seeking the same as generations before them. My father-in-law Israel Goldfarb came here and changed his name. He became Earl Gould, and that was the only person I ever knew. He died as a young man. He didn't get to enjoy his grandchildren.

So there are lots of reasons why we have to fix our broken immigration system and help the many people who are undocumented here get right with the law. It is time for reform that helps them contribute fully to their communities by learning English, paying taxes, and starting down the pathway to earn their citizenship.

The bill we have from the Judiciary Committee is not a perfect bill, but we don't have that here. In my more than three decades in Congress, there has never been a perfect bill. The Founding Fathers could envision nonperfect bills. They knew that is how we would get things done, by compromise. Legislation is the art of compromise. It is up to us to ensure America remains the land of opportunity for people born within our borders as well as those who seek a better future on our shores.

Finally, on another subject, ads have been run on TV, the radio, and in the newspaper about how the Democrats need to follow regular order in the Sen-

ate, and we have done that. But now my Republican colleagues are silent. We have been waiting for months now to allow them to allow us to go to conference for regular order. They are refusing to go to conference so we can come up with a budget that we can negotiate with the House as to what we should do.

It is obvious why we are not able to go to conference. It is so obvious. The Speaker does not want us to go to conference and the Republicans in the Senate are trying to protect him and the unwieldy job he has over there. He is trying to protect his job, and the tea party people are wreaking havoc with our country.

We should be able to go to conference. Republican Senators have said: Let's go to conference. What is stopping us from going to conference? I just talked about what is stopping us from going to conference, and it is truly detrimental to our country.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

REGULAR ORDER

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I wish to associate myself with the remarks of the majority leader with regard to our late colleague FRANK LAUTENBERG. He was, indeed, a member of the greatest generation, having fought in World War II and also has had distinguished service in the Senate.

I would also like to mention to my friend the majority leader, before he leaves the floor, I indicated to him before the recess that I intended to bring up each day going forward a commitment he made to the Senate back in January of 2011 and again in January of 2013—the beginning of the last two Congresses—with regard to using the nuclear option to change the rules of the Senate.

The most important currency of the realm in the Senate is one's word, and my good friend the majority leader said in January of 2011: "I will oppose any effort in this Congress, or the next, to change the Senate's rules other than through the regular order." It was not a contingent commitment, it was not a contingent based on my judgment of good behavior, it was a commitment.

Then again in January of 2013, in an exchange the majority leader and I had on the floor, I said I would confirm with the majority leader that the Senate would not consider other resolutions relating to any standing order or rules of this Congress unless they went through the regular order process. That was my question to my friend the majority leader to which he replied, "That is correct." Any other resolutions related to Senate procedure would be subject to a regular order process, including consideration by the Rules Committee.

My point is the commitment has been made, an unequivocal commitment has been made. In the Senate, of course, how we deal with all issues is related to keeping our word. It will be important for the Senate to understand, before we go much further this year, what the majority leader's intentions are. Does he plan to keep his word issued in January of 2011 and January of 2013 or not? I think the Senate is entitled to an answer. All Senators would be entitled to an answer, but particularly the minority would be interested in an answer to that before we go any further into this session.

STUDENT LOANS

With regard to the loan rates for students, I think it is interesting to note, as we go into this needless controversy because we are not that far apart, one of the driving reasons for the increase in the student loan rates—two of them—is directly related to the passage of ObamaCare. In ObamaCare, the Democratic majority, without a single Republican vote, abolished the student loan program. The government took it over and raised the rates. So that is one reason rates are going up. The second reason is the Medicaid mandate, which the Supreme Court said is optional, but States are now wrestling with whether to accept this additional responsibility for vast new numbers of Americans who will receive a free health care card.

The two biggest items in every State budget are Medicaid and education. As Medicaid expenses rise, what State governments all across America have done is reduced educational funding to public colleges and universities, and in response to that the colleges and universities raise tuition. So the new generation coming along is getting it both ways: The rates are going up and the tuition is going up, so they have to pay back more at a higher rate, all related to something young people had nothing to do with, which was the passage of ObamaCare.

Washington has had to grapple with a lot of big issues over the past few years and we have had some pretty heated debates because there were real philosophical differences over how to address those challenges. That is why it is so nice to work on an issue where the two parties are in relative agreement. We are not that far apart on this student loan issue now. Neither party wants to see the rates rise in July, and both the President and Republicans generally agree on the way to make that happen. So there is no reason we should be fighting over this issue at this particular point. There is no reason the President should be holding campaign-style events to bash Republicans for supposedly opposing him on student loans when we are in agreement on the need for a permanent reform and when the plan we put forward is actually pretty similar to his own. Yet, somehow, that is what we saw last Friday at the White House.

That is certainly not going to help the students. Having a true policy de-

bate is one thing, but provoking a partisan squabble seemingly for its own sake is, frankly, ridiculous. Our constituents sent us here to govern, not to try to pick fake fights in some crusade to restore NANCY PELOSI to her speakership.

What I am saying to the President and my Democratic friends is this: Let's put politicking aside. There is no reason for a fight here. I hope we can finally begin to work. Students are counting on us to actually get something done.

Here is a quick rundown of where we are on the issue. There is the Senate Democratic plan that everyone knows is just a political bill—a short-term fix that would only apply to less than half of the students who plan to take out new loans—new loans—and it would impose permanent tax hikes—permanent tax hikes—in return for a temporary plan for half of the students. Let me repeat that: Another temporary fix paid for with a permanent tax hike. Even the President has dismissed this approach. So in my view it is not worth much of a discussion at this point.

The fact is the proposals Republicans put forward are actually closer to what President Obama has asked for. We both agree on the need for permanent reform that takes the decisions on interest rates out of the hands of politicians. The House has already passed a bill that would achieve those two goals, and Senate Republicans have put forward a bill that is also similar to the President's proposal, as both of our plans would employ a variable market rate that, as with a mortgage, doesn't change over the life of an individual student's loan. The President said he opposed a bill that didn't lock in rates. Ours gives students the certainty that the President agrees they should have. So if the President were serious about getting this done, he would have spent that time on Friday ringing up Senators to see how we could bridge our relatively small differences, not having a press conference and bashing Congress. This is one issue where both parties can find quick agreement, but only if Washington Democrats have the will to do so. Young Americans already have enough to worry about. They don't need Washington creating even more problems for them.

The youth unemployment rate for 20- to 24-year-olds is over 13 percent. In Kentucky it is more than 14 percent. Once many students graduate from college, they face a highly uncertain future. So the President has a choice to make: Does he want to push some campaign issue for 2014 or does he want to address the problem here and prevent this rate increase?

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business for 1 hour, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the majority controlling the first half.

The assistant majority leader.

STUDENT LOANS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I listened carefully to the statement made by the Republican leader. He talked about the issue of increased costs for colleges, saying the tuition is going up, and we have a student loan issue coming up with interest rates perhaps doubling. It was interesting when the Republican leader said the root cause of the problem is ObamaCare.

Well, it turns out, if we listen to the statements and speeches from the Republican side of the aisle, if a person's car won't start: ObamaCare. Too many popups on your computer: ObamaCare. Basically, it turns out that every problem in America can be traced to ObamaCare. ObamaCare, of course, is the health care reform act.

The health care reform act said, incidentally, that students in college can stay on their parents' health insurance plan until they reach the age of 26: ObamaCare. It also said those who are receiving prescription drugs under Medicare will pay less: ObamaCare. It went on to say you cannot discriminate against people when it comes to health insurance if they have a pre-existing medical condition: ObamaCare. So what we hear from the Republican side of the aisle: Any problem we have in the Midwest including too much rain in the Midwest: ObamaCare. It reaches the point where it strains credibility.

Here is what the problem is. On July 1, the interest rates on subsidized loans double—double—from 3.4 percent to 6.8 percent if we do nothing. The Republicans in the House of Representatives said they have a better plan. It is a plan which the Republican leader in the Senate just spoke to. We are going to move the interest rates—we are going to peg them to the 10-year Treasury bill, and the next thing we know it turns out the interest rate coming out of the Republican bill in the House is higher than 6.8 percent. In other words, if we did nothing as opposed to the Republican plan, students would be better off.

But we have a better idea. We are going to do our best to make sure we preserve the 3.4-percent interest rate on subsidized student loans. Is it important? It is critically important.

Look what is happening to students across America today. A lot of young people listen to their parents, listen to their teachers, and all their friends who say, Go to college, get a degree. It